

Phillips, Henry Jr.

Poems of Hermann Rollett

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POEMS

FROM THE GERMAN OF

HERMANN ROLLETT

TRANSLATED BY

HENRY PHILLIPS JR

„Hermann Rollett gehört unstreitig zu unsern begabtesten Lyrikern“
Wolfgang Menzel

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PREFATORY NOTE.

IN the literary history of the German-speaking world the name of HERMANN ROLLETT shines forth with a proud pre-eminence.

He was born at Baden-bei-Wien on the twentieth day of August, 1819, of an old and distinguished family. In his twenty-third year he published his first volume of poems, "*Lieder Kränze*," since which time his activity has been multifarious and unceasing. A voluntary exile during many years followed upon his aspirations for freedom and liberty; but since 1869 he has resided at his ancestral home, where he now lives after having filled a number of important positions in that municipality.

HENRY PHILLIPS, JR.

Philadelphia,

320 South Eleventh Street.

The medal that is reproduced as the frontispiece is the work of the well-known die-cutter, Prof. *Karl Radnitzky*, of Vienna.

SINGER'S ENVY.

I ENVY thee, oh nightingale,
Thou bird of mournful throat :
That ever in thy saddening tale
Thou strikest true key-note.

That ever in thy sobbings deep
Thy heart finds soft relief,
The woodland-showers gently weep
In thy eternal grief.

MOONSHINE.

I wrote a song by moonshine's ray
To send my sweetheart far away ;

And as I penned my words of love
The moonbeams in my song I wove !

And when she read in far-off land
The thoughts I graved with loving hand,

Around her pain-encircled head
A smiling glory calmly spread ;

As though Diana's silvery beam
In soft compassionate glance did gleam ;

Surrounded by love's placid light
She sank to sleep in peaceful night.

THE ROYAL BRIDE.

The young king left, amid his braves,
His halls of storied fame ;
Around him, like the ocean's waves,
His rich-decked riders came.
In golden sheen the train sped forth
To seek his unseen bride ;
To lead her home to grace his throne,
'Mid banners bright and trumpet tone,
Far from her parents' side.

And as the early day-dawn shone
He trod the forest ground,
When, lo ! a maid sate on a stone
With laughing loves around.

The march was stopped ; with smitten breast
The king stood still, in snare,
And cried, " Is't Glamour, or is't Truth ?
Did e'er my soul conceive such Youth,
My eyes such Beauty rare ?"

With love-smit glance and heart aflame.
That lovely form he views ;
" At Fortune's hest thou surely came ;
No bride save thee I'll choose.
'Tis thou for whom my soul doth yearn,
Thou maiden bright and pure ;
Before thee, as in prayer, I kneel,
My tears will show thee all I feel ;
My bride thou'lt be for sure."

Adown he leapt from off his steed,
And seized her by the hand,
While from his eyes there shot with speed
Love's fierce consuming brand.
But slowly rose that damsel bright :
" Oh, monarch, let me be !
Upon a throne's exalted sphere
A maid unworthy I'd appear
Of base and low degree."

Then up he sprang, and folded near
That maiden to his breast,
And cried : " Full well I know the fear
Thy lips have just confessed.
My crown for me hath lesser charms
Than thy sweet love can give ;
From off my throne will I descend,
My pomp and fame away will rend,
To rest in thy dear arms."

Soft smiled the damsel, full of glee,
" Thou'lt pardon me, sweetheart,
And to yon castle fare with me,
We nevermore shall part.
The monarch's daughter fain would see
Her royal suitor ride ;
Oh, happy day ! Thy heart to mine
Hath beat ; I'll with thee to the shrine,
Forever be thy bride."

AWAKE.

A voice rang through the valley
As dawned a cloudless day,
" Dear flower, shake off thy slumbers ;
'Tis I—the sun's warm ray.

“Unfold with trust and hoping
Thy budlets' tender cell,
And let fond Love's affection
In sanctuary dwell.

“The boon I crave is modest,
But in thy lap to lie,
To kiss thy tender blossoms
Ere in the moss they die.

“I'll seek but to repose me
Upon thy breast secure,
In guerdon I'll surround thee
With zephyrs sweet and pure.”

A NOSEGAY.

Whilome a warrior true and good
Forth from his love did ride ;
The knight is known as Manly-Worth,
And Freedom is his bride.

The soldier speeds with valor forth,
With firm and steady hand,
He seeks the maid a nosegay sweet,
As spring blooms o'er the land.

Bright roses culled that rider bold
To deck his bride so bland,
And those he failed to pluck with ease
He severed with his brand.

HOMAGE.

I am Love's mighty ocean,
And thou its pearl concealed,
The pearl within its bosom
As queen stands forth revealed.

I am the deep-blue Heavens,
Thou art the stars' bright glow
That o'er Love's roaring billows
Is mirrored in their flow.

I am the Evening Vesper,
And thou its silvery sound
That trembles through the zephyrs,
And scatters peace around.

I am thy tranquil poet
Whose heart beats but for Love,
And thou the thoughts so noble
That bear to Heaven above.

STILLE FREUDE.

Why weep'st thou, blossom, at break of day?
The flower smiled sweetly; "What's that you
say?"

I am so happy; I do not cry,
'Tis floods of joy that bedim my eye."

I asked the brooklet, "Why runs thy sheen
Like a river of tears through a meadow green?"
The rill babbled answer from deep in its breast,
"'Tis purest of pleasure my ripples attest."

Oh, dawning sky, why art thou so red,
As though thy Sun in the sea lay dead?
But Heaven laughed lightly; "The path I've
strowed
That leads the roses to their abode."

In burning flame rose the glorious Sun,
The flowers rejoiced as his course was run,
The runnell rolled merrily by in its bed,
And the Sun looked down, happy and pleased
overhead.

WITCHERY.

Oft in the gloaming
Gently a spark
Trembles and glistens,
Glow through the dark.

Waftings mysterious
Thrill through the gloom,
Waving and sweeping
Dulcet perfume.

Flushed to the heart's core,
Softly shines light,
From thy enchanting
Visage so bright.

Pleasure-encircled,
Silent, I greet,
Lest the sweet witch'ry
Swiftly should fleet.

FALLING LEAVES.

Why rustles midst the bushes
A weird and sombre tone,
As though the earth were writhing
With throes that pierced her bone ?

As though a painful warning
Smote through the cheerless wood ;
And, with fog-woven banners,
Besieged the forest stood.

In sadness moans the woodland
Affrighted at the breeze,
It feels in thought the death-knell
Of all its best-loved trees !

A fierce, sharp pang awakens
Throughout the forest drear,
The leaves in grief are shedding
Upon the earth—a tear !

*LIEBE MICH—ICH KUESSE DICH
IWACH!*

Love me and I'll kiss thee 'wake !
Thus to bud, the zephyr spake.

Not a word the flower replied—
Naught dreamed she what would betide.

Like a sea of pleasures deep,
Amorous breezes 'round her sweep ;

Kiss each leaf with tender grace,
Never cloyed with Love's embrace ;

Kissed with passion unconcealed,
Till the bud its flower revealed.

THE FOREST HOME.

Deep in a wood, from rocky cliff,
A merry brook doth bound,
Where close beneath the old gray stones
A hunter's lodge is found.

A happy life reigns in that home
Where dwell in forest-cheer
An aged pair and only child
For many a lonely year.

The ivy clings above the door,
The grass springs glad and green,
And, 'neath the moss-grown gabled-roof,
A mighty antler's seen.

Within all's sweet and clean and snug,
No mirror e'er more bright—
The linen shines in cupboard quaint,
The floors glow in the light.

And on the antlers 'fore the door
All day the birdlets sing,
All day from off the dazzling walls
The quails clear warblings ring.

The evening falls. From savory broth
The whirling smoke ascends ;
The tired huntsman seeks his home
Where rest with love attends.

His wife cooks busy at the hearth
Her coming husband's food,
While pure Marie, their only child,
Culls posies in the wood.

DAS IST EIN TAG.

This is a day that long shall ring !
The quail pipes in the corn,
The finch chirps carols full of glee,
The throstle trills hedge-melody,
The huntsman winds his horn.

The listening leaves deep whispers thrill—
The wood-lark warbles high,
From hill to dale soft Echo flies,
From rock and tree the song replies,
The gladsome Spring is nigh.

AUTUMN ECHOES.

With anxious longing
The Heavens are thrilled,
With saddening tear-drops
Its eyes are filled.

The earth deep shudders
In painful throe,
The forest mourneth,
O'ercome with woe.

In withered fragrance
The meadow lies,
A mournful whisper
Above it flies.

Now, Soul, shine glorious
In Sunlight's rays,
Which thou absorbéd
In Spring-tide's days.

WENN DER HIMMEL NOCH SO REIN.

When in the Heavens no cloud is seen,
When flames the golden orb of day,
There always is some marsh, or field,
Or forest where no sunbeams stray.

And where the mien and glance is bright,
The heart-beats full of joy and pride—
Canst thou not think that in some eye
A tiny tearlet still may bide ?

*WAS SINGEN UND SAGEN DIË
LERCHEN?*

What is't the larks sing and prattle
On high from blithesome chest,
When they upon a bright Spring day
With joyful pinion speed away,
On Heaven's glowing breast?

They chant and they babble, "Oh, days of joy,
In the warm Spring-tide can naught annoy!—
Too narrow the Earth is for our glee,
So up to the starry welkin we flee."

What is't the larks sing and prattle
On high from gladsome chest,
When they upon a soft Spring day
With joyful pinion speed away
On Heaven's peaceful breast?

They chant and they babble, "Oh, happy time,
When the sweet Spring-tide is at its prime!
For Man exults in the sparkling sky,
And we shower upon him, from far on high,
The blessings our songs can give."

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DER FRUEHLING IST VERKLUNGEN.

The joyous Spring hath vanished
With flowers and perfume ;
It's withered, sunken, songless,
It's buried deep in gloom.

But Love, true Love, remaineth,
Her pinions wide extend—
Praise be to Love that loveth
Until all time shall end.

ES TÖNT MIR OFT IM HERZEN.

Oft through my breast soft murmurs
A lost chord, lingering long,
That sighs and pines, but vainly,
To ring in mellow song.

I ne'er can find the cadence
For which the thought is meet—
And yet 'twill chime forever
Until my heart's last beat.

IN JEDER BAUM.

Each tree that rustles in the wind,
Each floweret's vernal animation,
Are leaflets sent us to remind
The soul of Nature's Revelation.

Upon each leaf is written clear
 "Believe the cheery Spring will come!"
Green hopes in every bough appear,
Deep in each flower's heart doth hum.

Each bud speaks forth in words of flame
Love's all-pervading Soul's laudation;
"Love, love, love, love!" the flowers exclaim
 "'s the soul of Nature's Revelation."

INTO PAIN.

The thick green grass on heathery slope
Speaks to my soul eternal hope.

The rose-decked mead in accents red
Cries, "Love forever till thou'rt dead!"

The Heaven, so blue, calls from on high,
"Ne'er let me from thy memory die."

Oh grass so green, thou canst not know
How soon the eye receives death-blow.

Thou tender rose, so glowing red,
Thou canst not know when Love is dead.

But thou, oh Heaven, so deeply blue,
Refresh my breast with cooling dew,

Or else set free from pang and pain
This weary heart from Care's domain !

NIGHT SONG.

A wretched, hunter's boy am I,
Whom luck forever passeth by ;
Full many a time my sight was true,
Yet did my bullet roll askew,
And like to-day each night doth fly—
I've watched in vain.

Oh, stars and moon, deep veil thy face,
In blackest gloom thy sheen embrace !
And let all light extinguished be,
E'en to the utmost verge I see,
For shine and glow can ne'er warm me—
My heart's in twain.

Speak soft to me, thou forest drear,
Thou soon shalt whisper o'er my bier!
Of deadly powder, just a mite,
A tiny bullet, aimed aright,
Upon the trigger pressure slight—
I greet thee, Night!

TO WHAT END?

To what end our life-time
Full of bliss and woe?
This unstable flitting
In the sunshine's glow?
Wherefore all this hurry
Without cease or rest?
Who can tell its mission—
Whither tends its quest?

Filled with love and hatred
Wherefore all these pains,
If, when all is vanished,
Emptiness remains?
Who can give the answer—
Will no tongue reply?
Yet the problem's urgent—
To what end—and why?

Whither when life's ended
And thou sweep'st on high
Yet hast left thy body
In the grave to lie ?
Rolling foam-decked billows
Drive the ocean's flow—
Who can read the riddle—
Whither do they go ?

But to these enigmas
Naught doth make reply—
None will solve the secret !
To what end—and why ?
Deeply it appals me,
Son of mortal sire,
That we live a moment
Freed from sadness dire !

MYSTERY.

Now the heart hath ceased to beat,
Now the flame hath ceased to burn,
O'er the grave-yard's storm-worn cross
Life's despair to tears doth turn.

Silence reigns where dead lie stilly,
Scarce a Zephyr's moan doth creep,
Dreaming flowers are gently bending
Crown-capped heads as if in sleep.

Grave-born Rose-bud—silent ever!
Ope' thy loving mouth to me,
To thy poet, speak sweet floweret,
Tell him what all this can be!

Soft the blossom sighs—"God's Acre
Holds its peace, ne'er utters sound,
For this world's mysterious riddle
Rests within its bosom's bound."

VOICES OF THE NIGHT.

Shadows trembling flutter
o'er the ground,
Wrapped in veil of star-light
Night sinks 'round.

Blow on blow resoundeth
gently by,
From the mill-wheel Zephyrs
bear them nigh.

Deep and wide the silence—

List! What's there?

Lovers' tender kisses

float on air.

Then a lengthy quiet—

Hark! a stroke—

Heavy fell in forest

mold'ring oak.

Once more stillness conquers—

List! Afar

Something rustles—from Heaven

shot a star.

Then the densest silence—

From the lake

Sobbing, moaning, groaning—

Hearts that break!

Long, long weary stillness—

Now a sigh—

In yon gloomy thicket

doth one die?

Mead and meadow tranquil—

All repose—

Hush! the sprites of Elfdom

dance in rows.

Stilly silence reigneth—
List ! On high
'Tis the wood-fay calling—
wild her cry !

Quiet, deathly stillness—
Silence sleeps—
But th' affrighted heart ne'er
silent keeps !

THE TWO WISHES.

(A TRADITION OF THE HARZ MOUNTAINS.)

Now list to me and mark it well—
Upon Sylvester-eve it fell,
Two wanderers, strangers to these parts,
Reached Ilsenstein within the Harz.

From Frankfurt City came the twain,
Wayfarers from the stilly Main,
With souls that burned within their breast—
To view the wide, wide world their quest.

“ Be welcome, worthy friends, to me,
Right goodly lodged and fed ye’ll be ;
With royal wine to make fine cheer,
We’ll pledge good luck to the New Year.”

The midnight hour just had struck—
“ Touch glasses, landlord, here’s good luck,”
But lo ! he sighed with saddened mien,
“ Alas, what wretched days I’ve seen.”

The jolly wanderers fain would know
What caused their host this sudden woe,
But dumb he kept and sign made none,
Till out he spake in downcast tone :

“ Among the rocks on Felsberg high
There is a spot you can descry ;
For him who dares, a wondrous sight
Smiles there on each Sylvester-night.

“ What time the midnight hour doth sound
Two silvery flowers spring from the ground,
And he who plucks in silence grave
Whate’er he wish he’ll surely have.

“ From year to year did I delay,
And now my hair is silver-gray,
My aged limbs too feeble grown—
And that's the reason why I moan.”

The travelers listened, wrapped in gloom,
In silence walked the spacious room,
And paced the floor with lengthening tread—
“ And I'll go too,” each sudden said.

Soon had they reached the fabled hill
And at the appointed place stopped still,
Snow-strown two silver flowers stand
Which each rash plucked with speedy hand.

In silence down the steep they go
The sparkling flowers glittering glow,
And each thinks in his inmost breast
Which of his wishes shall be blest.

And thus the one: “ Thou flower so kind
Would that I owned the gold enshrined,
Where 'neath this rocky, dismal sward
An ancient dwarf keeps watch and ward.”

The other thought but word spake not,
“ Would I were in that sacred grot
Where ne'er have trodden mortal feet—
I would the Princess Ilse greet.”

And ere the breath can come, behold !
One stands immersed in heaps of gold ;
A valley filled with glistening store—
He counts it till his hands grow sore.

All he can hold he makes his prey,
The dwarf bears all the rest away,
The wealth he owns no man can count,
The starry heavens to less amount.

The other, quick as flash of light,
Stands in a wondrous palace bright,
Where crowns of laurel deck the wall
And harps from silken ribbons fall.

The sheen that glows within the glade
Of roses, rubies, pearls is made,
And Ilse sits on golden throne
Surmounted by her diamond crown.

There sits that form, serene and proud,
In pensive thought, with head deep-bowed ;
He looks with eyes hers fail to meet
Into that face so pale and sweet.

Rapt with the sight he nearer goes
But Ilse rests in calm repose,
With glance bent downwards from her throne,
But motionless as carved of stone.

Still onwards speeds his love-drunk pace
Till close he stands beneath her face ;
He grasps her hand—she lifts her head—
Then on a sudden all is fled.

The thunder pealed—the dream was o'er !
The mountain-side he trod once more,
Yet to this day his life recalls
The songs he heard in Ilse's halls.

The years rolled by, their lives were long,
One known for wealth, and one for song ;
The one as *Rothschild* won his fame,
But GOETHE—was the other's name.

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